

**Promoting Reconciliation in Post-Civil War Sri Lanka:  
A Case Study of Religiously Inspired NGOs**

Honors Thesis

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by  
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Sri Lanka recently ended one of the longest and most violent ethnically driven conflicts in the last half century. This Civil War sparked the first major usage of suicide bombing (long before the current Middle Eastern trend), and also deployed female militants as suicide bombers. The conflict claimed the lives of around 60-100 thousand combatants and civilians on both sides, and perhaps more, due to the high numbers of missing or disappeared persons that have not been accounted for. In the aftermath of the conflict, the state has implemented a number of programs to attempt reconciliation. But these have been mostly unsuccessful, largely due to uneven development practices, corruption, misallocation and uneven distribution of funds. Lack of genuine state interest in reconciliation, and its treatment of marginalized groups such as the Tamil Hindus and Muslims as second class citizens, was the root cause of the conflict in the first place. Continuing these uneven development practices and ineffective reconciliation programs could eventually spark further bloodshed and future conflicts. Because the state hasn't been a key actor in prompting increased cohesion, this burden has fallen on NGOs and other civil groups. This paper will examine how failure of the state in its reconciliation strategies exacerbates the ethnic divide, and how the roots of psychosocial trauma, ethnic hatred and lack of trust between communities are socially motivated and religiously identified. Therefore, reconciliation strategies have no recourse except being viewed and implemented through a religious coloration.

In this study my goal is to assess the effectiveness of current reconciliation and social cohesion programs of selected faith-inspired NGOs in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of a three decade long Civil War. My research is informed by three general questions: 1) what are the implications of a constructivist approach to social cohesion in overcoming entrenched social conflicts? 2) how do NGOs in the cities of Colombo, Vavuniya and Mannar use this approach to

create new mechanisms of dialogue among different groups? and 3) what lessons might the Sri Lankan case have for other conflict-prone regions, for NGOs seeking to foster dialogue and cultural interchange between previously hostile groups?

Sri Lanka is relatively small in population and geographic size compared to other South Asian countries, but it is a distinct political entity that has a very high comparative Human Development Index (HDI) [see TABLE A, B, C, and FIGURE 1 below].

**Table A: Sri Lanka's HDI trends based on consistent time series data, new component indicators and new methodology**

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2005 PPP\$)	HDI value
1980	68.1	10	7	1,571	0.557
1985	69.2	10.5	7.6	1,835	0.583
1990	69.5	11.4	8.3	2,008	0.608
1995	69.1	12	8.6	2,446	0.627
2000	70.9	12.4	8.8	2,942	0.653
2005	74	12.7	9	3,510	0.683
2010	74.8	12.7	9.3	4,541	0.705
2011	74.9	12.7	9.3	4,876	0.711
2012	75.1	12.7	9.3	5,170	0.715

Figure 1 below shows the contribution of each component index to Sri Lanka's HDI since 1980.

TABLE A- "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Sri Lanka, HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report." *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2013. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>

**Table B: Sri Lanka's HDI indicators for 2012 relative to selected countries and groups**

	HDI value	HDI rank	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP US\$)
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	0.715	92	75.1	12.7	9.3	5,170
<b>Pakistan</b>	0.515	146	65.7	7.3	4.9	2,566
<b>India</b>	0.554	136	65.8	10.7	4.4	3,285
<b>South Asia</b>	0.558	—	66.2	10.2	4.7	3,343
<b>High HDI</b>	0.758	—	73.4	13.9	8.8	11,501

TABLE B- "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Sri Lanka, HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report." *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2013. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>

**Table C: Sri Lanka's IHD for 2012 relative to selected countries and groups**

	IHD value	Overall Loss (%)	Loss due to inequality in life expectancy at birth (%)	Loss due to inequality in education (%)	Loss due to inequality in income (%)
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	0.607	15.1	9.4	14.6	20.8
<b>Pakistan</b>	0.356	30.9	32.3	45.2	11
<b>India</b>	0.392	29.3	27.1	42.4	15.8
<b>South Asia</b>	0.395	29.1	27	42	15.9
<b>High HDI</b>	0.602	20.6	12.4	19.9	28.6

TABLE C- "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Sri Lanka, HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report." *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2013. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>

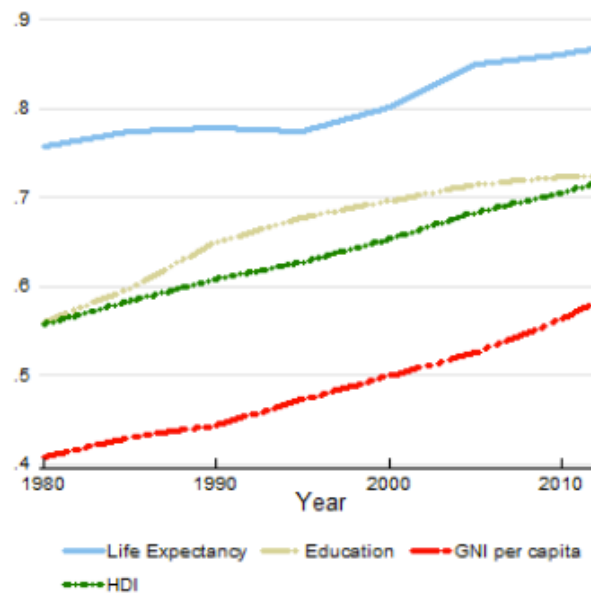
**Figure 1: Trends in Sri Lanka's HDI component indices 1980-2012**

FIGURE 1- "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Sri Lanka, HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report." *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2013. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>

Nevertheless, there are major gaps in our knowledge and experience as to how effective reconciliation programs have been in the intermediate and long term, especially considering that the War ended fairly recently (6-7 years ago). Assessing how effective programs have been in rebuilding trust and recreating social cohesion in war affected communities is of foundational importance in crafting strategies that will have lasting impact. My study seeks to address these

gaps by looking at the progress of NGO movements and programs currently working toward reconciliation. In approaching this study, I have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods including fieldwork with NGOs in Mannar, Colombo and Vavuniya. These NGOs are engaged in social cohesion and rehabilitation work, and include the larger Sarvodaya Movement, the Christian NGO, Caritas, and the smaller NGOs, Action Aid, and the Center for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR). I have conducted interviews with leaders and representatives from these organizations to determine the efficacy of certain programs, and have combined this with my own participant observations as well as content analysis of current media reports and literature. My primary method of collecting information was through key informant interviews, especially NGO administrators developing these strategies, and workers on the ground who are implementing these strategies on a case study basis. I utilized a method of snowball sampling to gain additional information and contacts, and conducted a number of interviews with a professor of Sociology at Peradeniya University. I interviewed priests in the Northern region to gain insight into the social and political climate of the Northern community and to understand the issues they feel are the most important or least addressed by NGOs and the Sri Lankan Government. In addition, I have made extensive use of secondary data from the International Center for Ethnic Studies (ICES), an NGO in Kandy that conducts research on violent group conflict and that has an excellent library and numerous archival resources on the subject. I also utilized the Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education Program's (ISLE) library to assess the role of NGOs in promoting social cohesion through dialogue and social and cultural activity.

This research hopes to contribute towards a better understanding of reconciliation strategies in post-conflict societies such as Sri Lanka. It will stress the need to actively create and sustain platforms for dialogue and inclusive cultural participation. It will also assess how the

strategy of Sri Lankan NGOs fosters social cohesion and how these strategies may be applied to other ethnically based conflict areas, and vice-versa.

This paper is organized into five sections. Section one provides a brief historical resume of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Section 2 focuses on conflict resolution, social cohesion and methodology of the study. Section 3 concentrates on small and large scale NGOs and their strategies for creating trust and reconciliation between differing ethnic communities. Section 4 focuses on the enduring challenges and issues that has yet to be addressed in creating a stable peace and overall social cohesion. Section 5 provides a comparison to other ethnically motivated conflicts internationally and how lessons from their reconciliation strategies could be applied to the Sri Lankan context.

## **1. Historical Context**

The conflict between the majority Sinhalese Sri Lankan Government and the minority Tamil armed opposition known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) lasted for over 25 years, from the early 1980s to 2009, and concluded with the defeat of the LTTE. The conflict was one of the longest and violent civil wars in recent history, marking the first widespread use of suicide bombing. Sri Lanka is a multi ethnic and multi faith island nation located in the Indian Ocean and South Asia, with a population of about 21 million according to the 2012 census. Based on the most recent 2001 survey, the ethnic composition of the country is 74% Sinhalese, 7% Sri Lankan Moors (Muslims), 18% Tamil and the remaining 1% unspecified or "other." The major religions are 69% Buddhist, 7% Muslim, 7% Hindu, 6% Christian and 10% unspecified or other. Sinhala is the official national language, accounting for 74% of the population, while

Tamil is spoken by 18% and other languages are spoken by around 8% (“Sri Lanka Demographics Profile 2014,” n.d.). [FIGURE 2, 3]

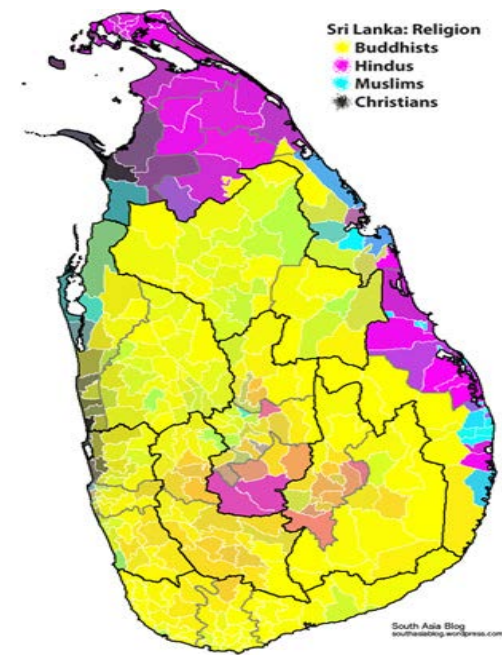


FIGURE 2- Map of Sri Lankan Geographic and Ethnic Composition. “3 Maps to understand Sri Lanka’s Minority-Majority divide in today’s vote.” *The Republic Square Sri Lanka*. 2015. Web. 8 Jan. 2015. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from: <http://www.therepublicsquare.com/politics/2015/01/3-maps-to-understand-majority-minority-srilanka/>

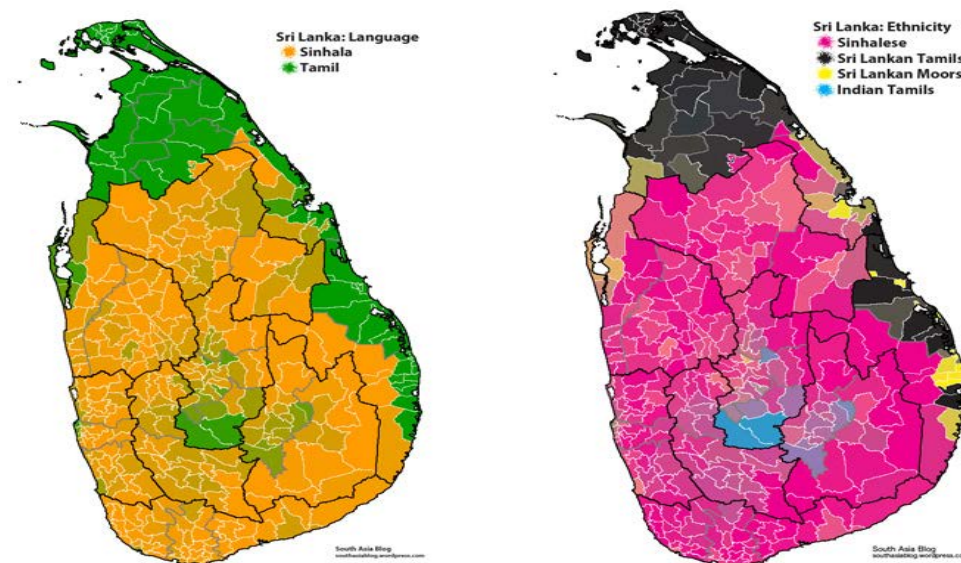


FIGURE 3- Maps of Sri Lankan Geographic Ethnic and Language Composition. “3 Maps to understand Sri Lanka’s Minority-Majority divide in today’s vote.” *The Republic Square Sri Lanka*. 2015. Web. 8 Jan. 2015: <http://www.therepublicsquare.com/politics/2015/01/3-maps-to-understand-majority-minority-srilanka/> Retrieved Apr 15, 2016.

Until it gained independence in 1948, Sri Lanka under British colonial rule was known as Ceylon. Before Sri Lanka was colonized by the British, the different ethnic groups of the territory had co-existed within a more or less tolerant relationship that could accommodate different beliefs and practices. However, the British colonial state privileged certain social groups over others, leading in the post-colonial period to increasing competition between the groups striving to gain favor and power in the newly independent state. The British appeared to favor the Tamils, and many Tamil workers migrated from India to work on coffee, rubber and tea plantations. However, in the decades after independence, many Sinhalese who had felt aggrieved by this sense of inequality began to assert themselves. Sinhala became the official language and Buddhism the national religion (Ariyaratne 1999). Ethnic antagonism was a direct result of the colonial legacy and the evolving post-independence structure of unequal power.

As tensions escalated, Velupillai Prabhakaran, whose father was previously a government employee, channeled anger among the Tamil populace to create the LTTE in 1976, which campaigned for an independent Tamil homeland in the highly populated Tamil regions in the northern and eastern sections of the island. In 1983, the LTTE used guerrilla tactics to kill 13 government soldiers, sparking ethnic riots and demonstrations, which led to the death of around 2,500 Tamils. In 1987, India, which also has a large Tamil population in the South, sent a peacekeeping army that ended up engaging the LTTE and eventually left three years later because of increased violence and lack of progress. The years of violence led to the displacement of many Tamils and migration to other countries to avoid the War and punitive measures directed at Tamil civilians as a result of the Tigers' actions. In 2002, Norway was able to negotiate an uneasy truce, which held together only because of the devastation caused by the 2004 tsunami that claimed around 30,000 lives. However, by 2009 the LTTE's military resources



and capacities had been greatly degraded due to the death of their leader Prabhakaran and as a result of a series of victories by the Sri Lankan Government. The LTTE had basically been reduced to a guerilla army that could nevertheless continue to engage in sporadic guerilla warfare. However, their overall military capabilities and revenue streams were greatly diminished (due to a blockade of funds from Tamils abroad, and the LTTE being labeled a terrorist organization by various governments, including India).

Both the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE have been accused of violating international law, with numerous human rights abuses, including the use of child soldiers, kidnappings, extortions and assassinations. This brutal civil war has reportedly killed around 60-100 thousand people, and displaced and wounded many thousands more. Overcoming this legacy of violence is a major challenge for both the Sri Lankan Government and its people. The following section provides a brief overview of the reconciliation efforts the state has been promoting.

## **2. Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion**

In the aftermath of the War, integrating the existing and returning Tamil population into the mainstream of society has become centrally important. Political interaction between the two groups over the last 30 years had revolved primarily around talks for peace or independence. Now that the LTTE is no longer a military threat (apart from its potential for isolated acts of guerrilla terrorism), new avenues for dialogue on the critical issues of democratization, labor rights, rigid caste hierarchies, social inequalities, and gender empowerment are coming to fore.

In this context, the Sri Lankan Government needs to work on creating the conditions for lasting social integration and cohesion, as the LTTE's vision of an independent state for Tamils still resounds with many displaced Tamils abroad and in the country (Bajoria 2008). While the

Sri Lankan Government has made some efforts to promote social cohesion, accept responsibilities for human rights violations and locate missing persons through the Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), their attempts so far have been largely unsuccessful. The LLRC has made a few decent recommendations, such as the necessity to ameliorate the situation of displaced families and individuals. However, the LLRC has been criticized for rejecting input from international organizations like the United Nations and for failing to act as an impartial fact gathering organization. The purpose of truth commissions is to unearth violations and expose those responsible, which of course depends on their transparency and answerability. However, a common impression in the North is that the commission seems to have been created simply to prevent international backlash and placate human rights groups and foreign governments. This perception is strengthened by the Sri Lankan Government's refusal to involve the UN and other groups in their national "reconciliation" organization (Seemans 2010). Moreover, the Ministry of National Languages & Social Integration does not have an influential presence in the country.

Complicated political jargon about societal cohesion, integration and assimilation has created the impression that reconciliation is occurring, while clouding the reality that there has actually been very limited societal and structural level adjustment. Minority, and specifically Tamil tribulations have largely been ignored, leading to increased concern and apprehension among organizations laboring to promote social unity, tolerance and understanding. The state has worked on developing overall service programs but has failed to invest in ethnic/religious reconciliation measures. A larger structural problem is that current governmental programs are enacted in an extremely disputed political sphere, and this undermines any effective attempts at cohesion (Cox, Orsborn, and Sisk 2014). For example, the Government prevents attempts to

memorialize and honor Tamils that died during the War, and thwarts attempts to prosecute the many human rights violations that had occurred.

Fortunately, in spite of the crisis situations that have unfolded over the years (25-year Civil War, 2004 tsunami) the country still scores at a fairly high level on the Human Development Index. Sri Lanka has recovered significantly since the end of the War, in no small part because of the role and assistance of NGOs and other humanitarian groups. It is experiencing rapid economic growth especially in construction and tourism sectors. Current governmental relief efforts are more focused on creating improved living conditions, and increasing educational attainment benchmarks, particularly among returning individuals and families. The Government has also instituted a few, albeit, limited policies such as the three-language policy, which is attempting to create an inclusive national educational structure designed around classes taught in Sinhalese, Tamil and English, and the Divi Neguma program that offers state funded financial assistance to small farm owners. But these are clearly insufficient to address immediate concerns of large-scale reconciliation.

Some of these strategies to healing ethnic discord are consistent with the "Constructivist Model" of nationalism. According to this model, personal and community identities are flexible, constantly being reshaped in societal dialogues, which can be swayed by administrative institutions and policies. As Kaufmann argues, "The best-developed blueprint for civic peace in multi- ethnic states is power-sharing or 'consociational democracy' proposed by Arend Lijphart. The key components are: 1) joint exercise of governmental power; 2) proportional distribution of Government funds and jobs; 3) autonomy on ethnic issues (which, if groups are concentrated territorially, may be achieved by regional federation); and 4) a minority veto on issues of vital importance to each group" (Kaufmann 1996). But they are either not effectively implemented by

the state. The state has arguably failed to fully embrace these approaches, but they remain effective, and I will demonstrate, are the general blueprint that the majority of contemporary NGOs that I examined, follow.

Elucidations of the causes of ethnic conflict are usually academically broken down into three distinct theories. The first theory is Primordialist and states that, “ethnic groups and nationalities exist because there are traditions of belief and action towards primordial objects such as biological features and especially territorial location” (Horowitz 1985). The Instrumentalist theory views identity, race and ethnic orientation as highly correlated and as crucial identifiers that can be used to further political, social or economic agendas. In this view, ethnic conflicts are a myth and ethnicity isn’t the root cause of conflicts, but it is more correlated to economic, political and social factors. (Grosby 1994) This theory explains the continual perpetuation of ethnic conflict as a result “of the actions of community leaders, “who used their cultural groups as sites of mass mobilization and as constituencies in their competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes” (Smith 2001). This theory was created in the 1960-70s United States when increasing number of foreign immigrants called into question the persistence of white ethnicity in the context of a growing melting pot. However, it is through the critical Social Constructivist approach (the third theory) that one can begin to understand that rather than being timeless or essential features of societies, social/ethnic conflicts are outcomes of particular political structures and policy options that favor some groups above others. As Vivien Burr has noted, “social constructionism argues that there are no ‘essences’ inside people that make them what they are. If the social world ... is the product of social processes, it follows that there cannot be any given, determined nature to the world or people.” (Burr 2015)

The forging of a pluralist and shared national cultural identity is essential in developing new relationships among the citizens of Sri Lanka, and can be accomplished through initiatives through which perspectives of different groups can be shared with each other, and cooperation across disparate groups is encouraged in developing resources for development, rather than placing groups in competition with each other. For example, an interesting social program run by NGOs is the Music Project, which brings together Tamil and Sinhalese youth living in different areas, and they are taught to play instruments together. They also perform a few collective concerts every year, offering sites for children and adults to socialize (Ao 2014). Other potential strategies to increase social cohesion, unity and rehabilitation would be to establish a public arena for dialogue on questions of identity and shared principles, at the local, regional and national level, and in ensuring that the disenfranchised minorities have an active and sustainable voice.

### **3. Non-Governmental organizations and conflict resolution**

This section will focus on how NGOs in Colombo, Vavuniya, and Mannar have deployed critical Social Constructivist approaches to promote new social and cultural interactions as a way to overcome the legacy of the Civil War. I have pursued a course of research that has included work on post-conflict social reconciliation and integration. My research locations were primarily in the small towns of Mannar and Vavuniya in the North that were greatly affected by the War, and in Colombo, which is the largest city in Sri Lanka and is located on the western coast of the island. Colombo has a diverse population of various ethnicities and has the head offices of many NGOs, making it an excellent site for gathering data. While in these locations I worked with many local NGOs, the largest being the Sarvodaya Movement and Caritas, and the smaller Center for Peace

and Reconciliation and Action Aid. This has afforded me a dual perspective on the operating procedures, goals and strategies utilized by both small and large NGOs. I also interviewed a sociology professor from Peradeniya and numerous priests in the northern region to gain insight into the socio-political climate of the northern region, and understand which issues still need to be properly addressed.

### PERSPECTIVE 1

To gain an understanding of the role of NGOs nationally I interviewed Dr. Dhammika Herath, Professor of Sociology at Peradeniya University who has a concentration in peace and conflict studies. We discussed many issues, regarding the political climate of reconciliation and why NGOs are effective in creating trust between communities. Most NGOs have complemented the Government in physical reconstruction, however little work has been done on healing psychosocial trauma and furthering reconciliation programs, which seems to be the focus of mostly smaller NGOs. The redevelopment process after the War has been driven by material reconstruction and large-scale mega-development projects rather than a focus on societal or community level reconstruction. Clearly there are powerful economic interests behind these mega projects, and demonstrate a clear instrumentalizing of reconciliation for special interests. Compared to other conflict prone regions globally such as Mozambique in Africa and El Salvador in South America, Sri Lanka clearly hasn't done enough political or social reconciliation.

Changes in the Sri Lankan administration have also had contradictory and uneven effects on reconciliation. During the previous administration under President Rajapaksa, the majority of prisoners were imprisoned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act or PTA, which is a draconian

piece of legislation where most of a citizen's legal and human rights are ignored; confessions under duress can count as evidence; one can be held for years, even decades without a formal charge or conviction; and one can not challenge one's own arrest in court. Depending on which "side" one was on, Tamil or Sinhalese, there are different terms used to describe these prisoners, political prisoners or detainees, respectively. However, it doesn't make much sense to keep most citizens imprisoned, as they were either low-level LTTE combatants, or supporters who were just following the orders of the higher commanding officers. Ironically, higher ranked officers are mainly roaming free or even working for the current administration.

Recently, with a new and more liberal administration under President Sirisena coming to power in 2015, other steps toward rebuilding trust and cohesion have progressed. These include initiatives such as allowing the national anthem to be sung in Tamil. But although the current government is considered more just and liberal, still, it has regressed in releasing people from prisons, due to it being influenced greatly at cross-purposes by multiple parties. The previous, more extremist government was able to make more radical decisions in this regard, and actually released more people from prisons (around 12,000), most of whom have been rehabilitated and are back with their families. But during the previous administration, NGOs applying for financial support or access to specific regions couldn't use specific trigger words in their proposals or they would be immediately rejected, such as conflict, revolution, civil war, and unrest.

A major issue overlooked by both administrations is that most people in Sri Lanka don't have access to professional counseling or therapists, so they are reliant on NGO assistance for psychosocial trauma support and rehabilitation, or rely on faith in religion. Another issue is that there is social stigma associated with going to therapists, as it publically announces that you have a problem, and most people would prefer to hide and repress these feelings and issues. Another

very contentious issue is the recently proposed creation of committees to investigate war crimes, using international lawyers and judges, a measure proposed by the United Nations Human Rights Council, to increase accountability and ensure a fair judicial process for victim's families. While the committees themselves are already very controversial, the issue of bringing in foreign judges is causing much social and political tension among Sinhalese Government officials. There are fears that high-level security officials may be prosecuted or arrested. It would be ideal to have impartial judges, but Dr. Herath feels it isn't practical due to the immense amount of opposition from the Sinhalese Government. While it is the ideally right thing to do, it may not be politically feasible. Therefore, a great deal of the burden of governmental advocacy, trauma counseling, and ethnic reconciliation activities to rebuild trust has been relegated to the NGOs. I argue that the work of these NGOs can be best understood as implicitly working through a critical Social Constructivist approach in many of their initiatives.

## PERSPECTIVE 2

Sarvodaya is one of the largest, oldest and most prominent NGOs in Sri Lanka. It was founded by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, who is also its current president and who has recently been appointed as a civil society representative to the constitutional council by the Sri Lankan parliament. He is also on President Sirisena's executive board, so the organization has a lot of power to influence and implement change. Fortunately, I was able to meet and interview his son, the current general secretary of Sarvodaya, Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, as well as Mr. Bandula Senadheera, who is the executive assistant of the International Division located in their headquarters in Colombo. Sarvodaya was founded in Sri Lanka, but has become a large international organization with branches in many different countries, including multiple branches in the US, and they also



partner with many other NGOs. They focus on infrastructural development work, healing trauma and establishing peace and reconciliation. From these interviews I gained valuable insight into the goals, programs and operations of the movement. [FIGURE 4]

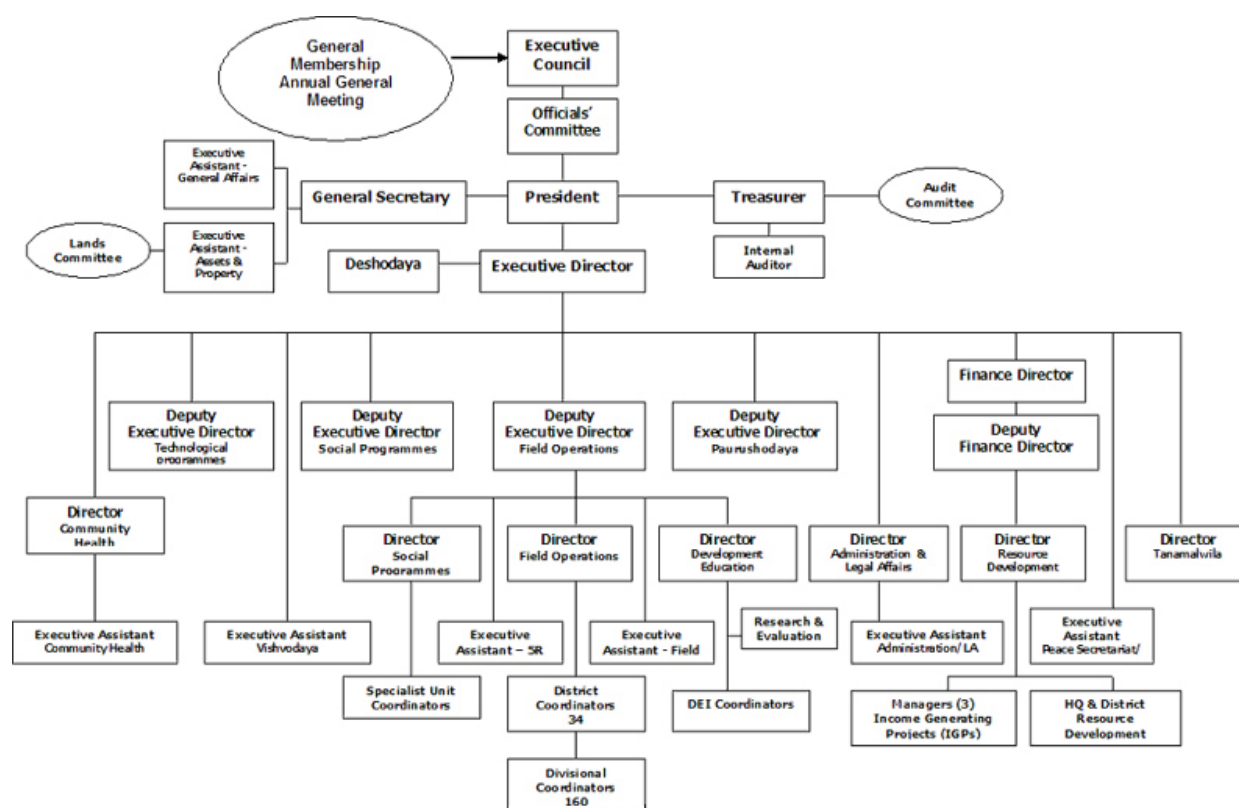


FIGURE 4- Sarvodaya Organizational Structure- Ariyaratne, A.T. Sarvodaya. (n.d.). (2005). Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/org-structure>

Dr. Ariyaratne founded Sarvodaya in 1958 to help create a movement that stressed a society that has no poverty and no unequal affluence, built around equality, community based efforts, and volunteerism. It has now become Sri Lanka's most broadly embedded grassroots movement. Their function is to create self-governing societies and communities that sustain their own basic needs. The philosophy of Sarvodaya is derived from the meaning of the word Sarvodaya, or awakening of all. It aims to create a virtuous society on the individual, family, village, national, and global levels by focusing on the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic

and political dimensions of society. In the beginning, the movement was focused on meeting the basic needs of society such as food, shelter, and infrastructure, but its goals have evolved to dealing with issues like alcoholism, child abuse, women's empowerment, legal rights, and ethnic conflict.

Sarvodaya believes in 10 basic human needs; a clean beautiful environment, clean drinking water, adequate clothing, adequate and balanced nutrition, simple housing, basic health care, basic communication facilities, energy supply, holistic education, and satisfaction of spiritual cultural needs and peace building. While its Buddhist founders based Sarvodaya on Buddhist principles, it isn't only a strictly Buddhist organization: the philosophy it embraces is common to many religions, and the NGO works with all religious and ethnic groups. It believes that people need to build individual peace, as without that, one can't teach others peace and love. Sarvodaya's objectives are to build a common national identity, by ending violence amongst all groups, and devolving power to the smallest level while still under the overall control of a national government. It also hopes to influence the creation of a constitution that is more inclusive and contains a bill of rights.

Sarvodaya uses activities such as peace dialogues, exchange programs, amity camps, and pen pal programs to promote reconciliation and peace. ("Sarvodaya", n.d.) One of its most successful activities was to draw public support and international attention to the issues of ethnic reunification in Sri Lanka by holding an event called one million people to mediate for peace. Hosted in 2006, it was a record-breaking event that also involved the global community. ("Sarvodaya", n.d.) It also partners with organizations such as the Shanthi Sena Peace Brigade, which is one of Sri Lanka's largest peace oriented organizations, concentrating on youth

involvement and participation, and geared toward developing youth leadership and creating a disciplined society that is free of hate and violence. [FIGURE 5]

	Legal Entity	Permanent Cadre			Project/temporary Staff			Total
		Male	Female	Sub-Total	Male	Female	Subtotal	
1	Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya Inc.	329	214	543	78	43	121	664
2	Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Service (GTE) Ltd.	505	250	755	17	2	19	774
3	Sarvodaya Vishvalekha (Pvt) Ltd.	107	16	123	59	0	59	182
4	Sarvodaya Suwasetha Sewa Society Ltd.	11	99	110	7	4	11	121
5	Sarvodaya Shanthisena	05	02	07	0	0	0	07
6	Sarvodaya Legal Services Movement	18	13	31	05	17	22	53
7	Sarvodaya Women's Movement	02	03	05	0	08	08	13
8	Sarvodaya Trust Fund							
9	A.T.Ariyaratne Charitable Trust	04	02	06	01	0	01	07
10	Deshodaya (not a separate legal entity as yet)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>1573</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>1821</b>

FIGURE 5- Sarvodaya Staff by Department- Ariyaratne, A.T. Sarvodaya. (n.d.). (2005). Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/staff>

Sarvodaya has 26 district centers in Sri Lanka, each with district coordinators. Each center holds monthly meetings between all its members. They are currently working with 15,000 villages (out of roughly 38,000 in the country), and have helped form societies at the grassroots level. Each village they work with now has a president, treasurer, security and other administrative staff. After each village has formed a small municipal working governmental structure, Sarvodaya's Community Capacity Building Unit gives support to the formed society to get legal recognition, to become a self-sustaining body, and strong independent community. These are called CBOs or community based organizations on the grassroots level. Eventually some communities reach

such a level of development and become so successful that they are able to independently help other organizations and communities achieve independence without Sarvodaya's help. These CBOs are created under the Shramadana program, "sharing one's labor time, thought and relationships to support village development." In this program they create organized work camps, and the community works together to achieve an objective (usually some sort of infrastructure development), "we build the road and the road will build us." After close monitoring and establishing a structure, community, and system of leadership, Sarvodaya provides micro financing through the creation of a small bank and invests funds from their headquarters. The people of the village need to become members of the society to get a loan, and can deposit money in this local bank. The excess is given again as loan, with very little interest. In this way villagers don't have to wait a long time for loans when compared with private institutions or government banks, and it keeps the money circulating within the community. Sarvodaya also monitors and helps with proposals for loans, if villagers can't do it themselves.

Through these programs, they are gradually able to develop ethnic and religious harmony at the village level through building respect, promoting growth, encouraging visits, and hosting functions between Tamil and Sinhalese communities. They are able to create integration through these events, interactions, and cooperative labor. Sarvodaya encourages the communities to find leaders from amongst the different ethnic groups, and the executive positions should rotate among them based on a monthly or yearly basis, usually decided by general elections. This process helps build peace, trust and understanding by establishing leaders from amongst all the ethnicities. Also, when Sarvodaya is implementing their programs, they don't favor one group over another, but rather they listen to all religious leaders, community members and other local participants for development ideas. Donations to the Sarvodaya District center are transferred

directly to programs, such as these village developments, and Sarvodaya continuously monitors the usage of these funds to make sure they are being allocated and distributed usefully and properly. [FIGURE 6]

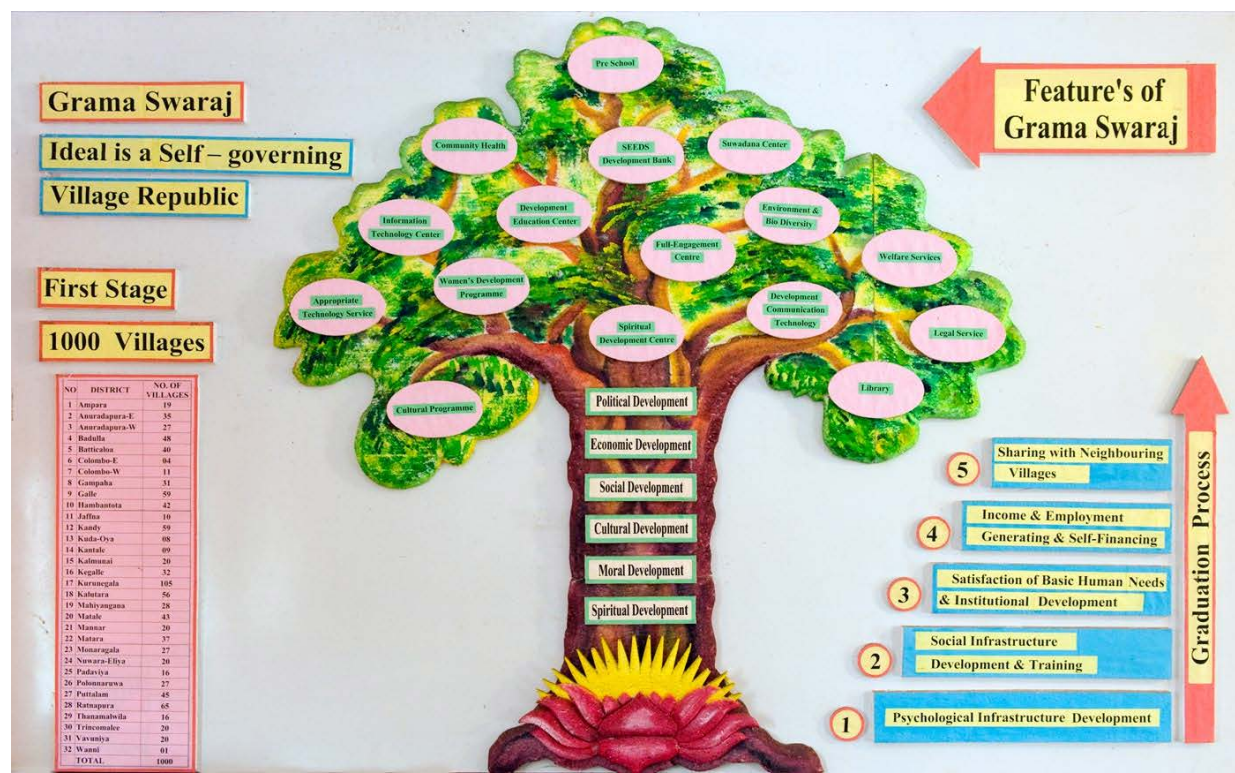


FIGURE 6- Sarvodaya Development Tree Model. The Permaculture Research Institute. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from [http://www.permaculturenews.org/images/sri\\_lanka\\_grama\\_swaraj\\_detail.jpg](http://www.permaculturenews.org/images/sri_lanka_grama_swaraj_detail.jpg)

A major goal of the movement is the concept of *deshodaya* or awakening the nation, through promoting a culture of democracy, good governance, reconciliation, and sustainable peace through people's broad participation and consensual politics. This is a vision which goes beyond immediate relief and stresses the 5 core principles of Sarvodaya, also known as the 5R's; Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Reawakening. ("Sarvodaya", n.d.) The organization works in conjunction with the main ethnic groups to organize religious conferences, meetings, exchange programs and other events. They encourage the sharing of resources, such as when building a pre-school for a Tamil community they will encourage the surrounding

Sinhalese community and children to also attend this school, and learn each others' languages to increase communication amongst the communities. My interviewees noted that children are becoming rapidly adept at communicating across ethnic lines as they are taught three languages from a young age, English, Tamil and Sinhalese. Also, for youth, they organize many intercultural educational and extracurricular activities that cut across ethnic lines, such as youth councils, sporting events and other shared cultural events. They also encourage ethnic harmony through this combined development work and ethnic exchange programs where members of differing ethnic communities go to different communities to live and work. These exchange and volunteer programs are considered to be very effective, especially the exchange program for students to create a lasting generational change for the future. They also conduct study tours where students from foreign universities, or schools will come and work/learn in the village project sites. Sarvodaya also invites other NGOs to observe the strategies that they apply, which are good opportunities for them to exchange knowledge about strategies and apply these lessons back to Sri Lankan society.

I also conducted an interview session at the Sarvodaya district center in Vavuniya. There are three Sarvodaya offices in this district, the main one is a training center and the other two are volunteer offices. They are building up the organization's programs in this region, specifically the peace programs and the *bahavana* or meditation programs. They also offer a number of training courses to their volunteers and community members such as a beautician course, to offer women hope and opportunities for their future, language classes that enhance learning about rights and create better communication, and an event management course that increases capacity building for their Vavuniya and Mannar staff. They also host an annual Deshodaya assembly meeting to discuss the vision of Sarvodaya and future plans. However, there are three other

programs that they implement. The first is the meditation program, which they bring to Buddhist and Hindu temples, where they lead particular workshops, and use meditation to deal with trauma and mental problems, as well as develop mental facilities. Sometimes Tamils come to Buddhist temples and Buddhists come to Tamil temples for these events. The second program is the language-teaching program, where representatives teach Tamil to Sinhalese and Sinhalese to Tamil speakers, and this helps alleviate problems in the community by increasing bilingualism. It is also important to note that Sarvodaya staff also trains village people in the area to lead these meditation and language teaching programs in their own communities. In the third program they facilitate and mediate if people have a problem in the village, where they bring them into the Sarvodaya office and provide a space for conflict resolution.

Many of these approaches to reconciliation can be understood as being rooted in Buddhist culture that seeks to find resonances with Hindu beliefs. Indeed, Sri Lankan nationalism has been understood from such a culturalist perspective (Kapferer 2012). However, I argue that many of the post Civil War projects discussed above can be better understood as implicitly understanding and implementing a Social Constructivist approach. They assume that identities are malleable and amenable to transformation, based on policies that encourage the sharing of perspectives of the other group, and by developing participatory projects that engender mutual trust among different groups and communities. This is also the case in the remaining perspectives outlined below.

### PERSPECTIVE 3

While I was in Vavuniya and later in Mannar, I had the opportunity to speak with Father Jeyablan, director of Caritas Valvuthayam, as well as other staff members and volunteer workers.

Caritas is a prominent church based NGO that works on issues of social cohesion, peace and reconciliation as well as providing essential aid services and support. They work on issues related to community development and socio-economic concerns. Their vision and mission are to create a just society based on the principles of peace, unity and equality regardless of race, religion or ethnicity. They often receive funding from other NGOs, and especially from European countries and church organizations. During and after the War, they provided humanitarian assistance to the Vanni region, especially for the IDPs or internally displaced peoples, specifically providing food and limited shelter. Their programs are organized into a number of categories, the shelter program, emergency relief assistance, educational incentives, water and sanitation, vocational training, the Center for the Disabled, the Human Rights Awareness Program, and the Psycho-Social Program. I visited the main headquarters in Mannar and their Center for Disabled where they provide prosthetic and orthotic services as well as physiotherapy and psychotherapy services for individuals that have been injured and lost appendages in the Civil War, or through accidents or birth defects. Almost one third of their patients are there due to war related injuries, while the rest are mainly due to the high number of motor vehicle accidents in Sri Lanka. This Center has assisted thousands of people in regaining their mobility, livelihoods and sometimes even the will to continue living.

Recently, the Bishop of Galle (a city in the South) came and met the war-affected people in Mannar, where they discussed their mutual goal of building peace bridges between the North and South, and the necessity of maintaining unity and understanding amongst all religious denominations. As part of the meeting, the Bishop listened, advised and comforted individuals and families who confided to him about their troubles since the end of the War. (“Caritas Valvuthayam”, n.d.) Among the most prominent issues were those of mass disappearances and



imprisonment of innocent civilians, and the social and economic struggles of single women headed (often widowed) households. Recently, the organization also implemented a number of programs to help the resettlement of IDPs that were affected by the conflict. These activities included providing and building a pre-school service, constructing permanent homes, conducting livelihood capacity building programs, and psychosocial programs. Another service that they have provided is the Mobile Health Clinic, where they have established makeshift medical centers in a number of rural villages that were devastated during the War, and had no access to nearby hospitals or medication. The NGO sent physicians to these makeshift centers with medical supplies and medicine, and transported the more seriously injured patients to nearby hospitals, including patients with mental health ailments caused by the conflict. (“Caritas Valvuthayam”, n.d.) Caritas has also established and implemented an education program, where they provide financial support and schooling materials to underprivileged children impacted by the War, especially orphans. Moreover, they even provide monetary assistance to students accepted to universities, which continues until the student graduates. Another important program they implemented in 2013 was their Human Rights Program, with the goal of educating the public and community on the importance, inherent value and rights that every human being is entitled to have. This included leadership programs for women, language classes, voter education and awareness programs, and healing and reconciliation programs and discussions. (“Caritas Valvuthayam”, n.d.)

#### PERSPECTIVE 4

Larger NGOs are often the most recognized, financially well supported and are able to enact larger sweeping changes and programs, but the work of smaller NGOs that are perhaps

better able to interact on the individual, familial and local community level, shouldn't be underappreciated. One of the most interesting and effective NGOs operating primarily in Jaffna but also in Mannar and other small northern towns, is the Center for Peace and Reconciliation or CPR. Their vision is to create a violence free society based on justice, and to rebuild the relationships in Sri Lanka by establishing a holistic vision of peace and reconciliation. Their mission is to educate and empower anyone trying to prevent violence and promote peaceful conflict resolution and create inclusive and equal societies globally and nationally. I interviewed the executive director of CPR, Father Claier, who stated that their goal is to achieve reconciliation through non-violent means and build up peace and reconciliation in the post War era among all the ethnic groups. Programs they have implemented include the peace education program, and awareness programs and seminars for school children, youth, and adults in the larger towns and rural villages. One of their most successful and effective programs has been the exchange program with other ethnic groups, especially with Sinhalese students coming to Tamil regions, as it helps youth come to an understanding about the needs and feelings of other ethnic groups. In this way, by building cross-ethnic communication and trust, future generations can build up a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. Some of their major accomplishments are in mobilizing people and youth to speak out about human rights issues, and CPR has coordinated many silent protests wherever and whenever human rights had been violated. Also the northern provincial educational department had advised all the schools to include their "Peace Education" program as one of their extra circular activities. However, CPR needs to improve the sustainability of their organization, as the foreign organization that funded their programs has ceased funding them, and CPR is now trying to find other sources for funds and economic

support. Father Claier also feels that monitoring and evaluation within the organization itself needs to be improved.

CPR collaborates with the AJWS or the American Jewish World Service for financial support and for human rights training as well as the NECC or North East Coordinating Committee for communicating transitional justice in Sri Lanka. When defining transitional justice, Father Claier means that there should be justice given to the victims of the War. Compensation should be allocated and above all, people should hear the truth. Civilians should be able to build up trust in the local government, a process which he feels is missing in Sri Lanka. The CPR administration and their supervisors OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) actively monitor what percentage of their financial resources reach the ground, which they estimate to be around 85%. The organization utilizes a few mechanisms to obtain feedback from their staff and people they serve. They have regular evaluations with their employees and with the school students and teachers immediately after the program. They also have regular monthly meetings in which all the volunteer staff and animators who work in the field participate and share their opinions.

The structure of the organization is based around OMI, which is their provincial superior and the legal supervisor. The executive director is in charge of the center, and the associate director supervises the districts of Vavuniya and Mannar, with all of these posts being appointed by the church and the majority of officials being reverends and clergy. The other staff are from civil society such as the administrative officers, coordinators, and program assistants. One of the major issues they are facing is that they have limited funds for major future projects, and as such are currently only running human rights workshops and providing legal advice. They are also one of few organizations in the Jaffna and Mannar northern districts that work for human rights.

CPR has existed for over 10 years. While in the beginning they worked to locate disappeared people, over time they have realized the need to educate people about peace building, however they continue to work on issues of the disappeared. A few of the other programs that they implement are NVC workshops, which help spread the knowledge of non-violent communication, offer basic peace training programs that increase perceptivity to violence in society, teach personal conflict handling styles, and increase communication effectiveness and skills. (“Center for Peace and Reconciliation.” n.d.) They also provide peace education for children in primary schools to help them understand the need for peace and unity, and as part of the program, the children visit the local parliament in Jaffna and national parliament in Colombo. As part of their future plans, CPR hopes to establish a peace library in cooperation with other libraries in Jaffna, to help increase access to resources and teachings about conflict transformation, non-violent communication and reconciliation methods. (“Center for Peace and Reconciliation.” n.d.)

#### PERSPECTIVE 5

Next, I interviewed a representative from Action Aid, which is a large international NGO, however it has almost no presence in Sri Lanka. Internationally, Action Aid targets issues such as women’s rights, inequality, climate change, conflict, education, democratic governance, food and land rights, youth and HIV/AIDS. (“Action Aid International.” n.d.) In general, Action Aid has five key target areas in their work on women’s rights; violence against women, control over their bodies, mobilizing women economic rights and support for women farmers. (“Action Aid International.” n.d.) Their objective isn’t to provide charity, but rather, to create sustainable

conditions where individuals and families can support themselves. They take into account the needs of the recipient and community and help people use their own power to help themselves.

I spoke with the regional executive officer Muhammad Makeen, who has started implementing programs in the Vavuniya district this year. His organization can be considered a smaller subsidiary of Action Aid. Mr. Makeen's first program is targeted toward assisting women, especially those affected by the War. Women are already more likely to live in poverty with inequitable access to resources, such as land, education, and financial support, access to all of which has been exacerbated by the conflict. Mr. Makeen's project is titled *Livelihood Support for Women Headed Households, Widows & Elders*, and it aims to support groups that are affected by natural and man made disasters, such as resettled communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). They support family livelihoods such as home gardening, and cattle rearing, through supplying inputs such as raw materials and financial support. Their primary beneficiaries and target groups are single women headed households, elders, widows, and children.

Normally, people who have been recently resettled receive no support from the Government or other NGOs, so Action Aid identifies and provides support for these groups, and assists them in successful resettlement back to their original locations. These people can then have a platform for stable income to survive and thrive, and provide education for their children. Their process begins with the identification of necessary beneficiaries, then with support of Government offices they offer these target groups resources and inputs to help in resettlement and chart a stable development process for the future. The expected benefits of this program are that income will be increased, school dropouts will decrease, and education levels will increase, especially for children. Also the family's economic and social status in the community will

increase through stable income, and their technical aptitude will also benefit. This will also provide unique benefits for single women who can support and protect their children through autonomy over their own livelihoods, and can avoid working in jobs or occupations involving low wages and long hours with little flexibility.

The key officials of the organization are the project coordinator who is the focal point of the project, and is supported by the field staff. They hope to receive funding from the Australian High Commission and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. The intended beneficiaries will be actively involved in the project's design and implementation. Also when designing and implementing projects they expect 100% participation of the local community through listening to their proposals and concerns. Mr. Makeen has also implemented a system of monitoring and reporting arrangements, which will be continuously re-checked every 3 months, and which will also be based on the recommendations of the aid recipients.

#### **4. Enduring Challenges**

However even with all of the positive work that NGOs have done, there still remain many festering issues and unaddressed problems in the war-affected regions that are preventing reconciliation and rebuilding of trust. While in Vavuniya, I conducted a number of interviews with clergy, and priests from both the Catholic and Anglican churches. They didn't wish to have their names revealed due to fear of potential repercussions when speaking on sensitive issues, and as a result, I am respecting their wish to maintain anonymity. In general, I felt that the views of the leadership in these NGOs offered a more neutral stance from which to gain insight into the socio-political climate and general feelings of the region. Although membership of Christian communities in Sri Lanka include people from Tamil and Sinhala ethnicity, but it must be

stressed that they are neither Buddhist (Sinhala primarily) nor Hindu (Tamil primarily), already weakening an easy equation between ethnicity and belief. Moreover, I sensed that the leadership of the Christian NGOs I spoke with were able to rise above ethnicity, as their faith-based beliefs allowed them a perception of social action that traversed ethnic boundaries.

These Christian NGOs also they have numerous outreach programs, seminars and events throughout the community even for non-Christians. They have a very good understanding of people's feelings and the overall situation specifically on: what areas of development and reconciliation need the most work, and what people feel most dissatisfied about. For example, in Colombo, the Anglican and Methodist Dioceses have a desk for peace and reconciliation, as well as trauma counseling for all ethnicities. It needs to be stressed that being a Reverend in Vavuniya is very different from being a Reverend in Jaffna, which is primarily Tamil. The ministries in Vavuniya face a very different situation, as they come in contact with a far more ethnically mixed community, with large populations of Sinhalese Buddhists, Muslims and Tamil Hindus. Buddhist monks being able to speak fluent Tamil are also evidence this ethnic diversity.

The priests that I interviewed had a deep understanding of the situation in the North, and the needs and aspirations of Tamil, Sinhalese and even Muslim communities. They were also very aware of the perceptions of the international community, as many of them had studied abroad at European Universities (such as Oxford) or had been stationed in many diverse regions of the country before coming to Vavuniya and Mannar. One of the priests that I interviewed was even a former LTTE colonel. During the War, the LTTE controlled the Vavuniya interior, but there were also many different armed groups struggling for freedom and autonomy. The Vavuniya district in the Vanni region was strategically important during the Civil War as it was the main entry point into Jaffna and the LTTE held northern territories: the final conflict of the

War also transpired in the Vanni region. While the Christian clergy and populace wasn't directly involved on either side of the conflict, during the War the Government was fearful and distrustful of priests as they were easily able to communicate to outside world due to their contacts and knowledge of English. The Sri Lankan Government was keen to prevent the leak of any uncontrolled knowledge to the international community as evidenced by the disappearance and probable assassination of journalists, such as Lasantha Wickramatunga (d. 2009), a very straightforward, honest journalist, who was very critical of government actions during the War and who was himself Sinhalese Christian. This bias and continued restrictions on the flow of information continues to be perceived as a problem today.

While there are different interpretations of the conflict depending on which side you come from, the clergy agree that resettlement and reconciliation needs to happen in a proper way for long lasting peace. But this is not prevailing in this area due to the large presence of military personal, High Security Zones, and the CID. The latter is an intelligence organization akin to the FBI and still highly suspicious of Tamil actions and activities. All of this contributes to a sense of distrust within the society and among communities. A major issue is the presence of internally displaced persons or IDPs, whose resettlement still hasn't been completed. [FIGURE 7]



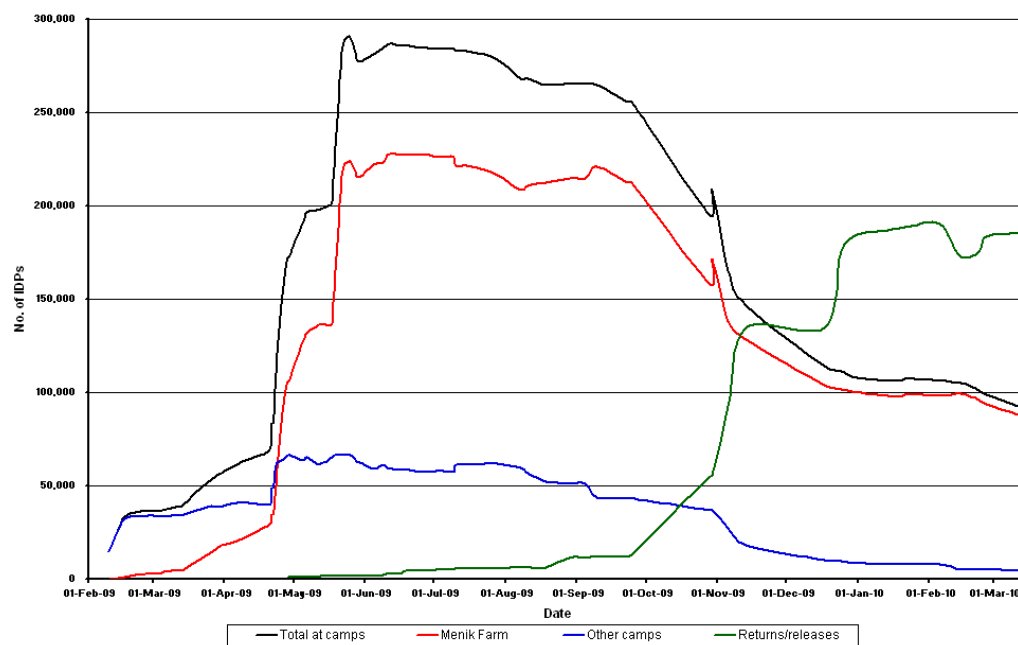


FIGURE 7- History of IDP Camps. Obi2canibe. 16 May, 2010. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sri\\_Lankan\\_IDP\\_Numbers.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sri_Lankan_IDP_Numbers.jpg)

Resettlement of IDPs and developing trust is crucial, as Tamils are expecting an enduring peace, not a shallow façade, and they still doubt the Government's effectiveness in achieving this.

Conversely, the Government remains suspicious of Tamil people's nationalism, so this dearth of mutual trust remains a root cause of the lack of reconciliation. Institutional inequalities also contribute to this. An example of such inequality is that according to the Constitution, only a Sinhalese Buddhist can be elected to the highest positions of power in the Government, thus institutionalizing politically based ethnic discrimination at the highest level.

Another major issue in the northern regions is that due to the large number of men that died during the War, there are numerous widows and women-headed households that are unable to support their families and children. [FIGURE 8]

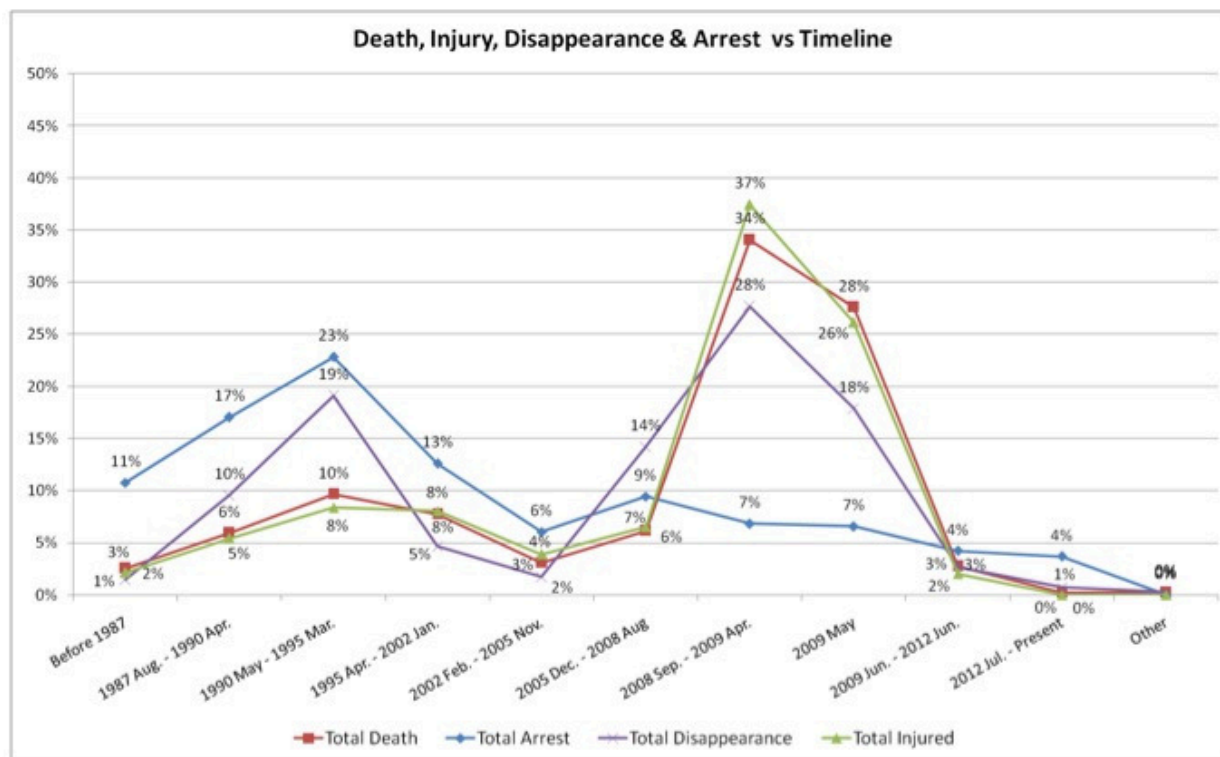


Figure 10: War-related deaths, injured, disappeared and arrested

FIGURE 8- **Ongoing Issues-** A Comprehensive Assessment of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Progress. The Social Architects. Colombo, March 14, 2013. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://sangam.org/numbers-lie/>

Historically, although the country received a lot of aid from NGOs, the international community and western countries after the War, redistribution of these funds was run by the Government, and often not enough reached the North. Citizens in the North kept asking the Government as to why aid couldn't be sent directly to the region, instead of it being run through central Government? This remains a problem to some extent. During the War and reign of the previous extremist government, the state banned many NGOs, because they felt that they were connected with the LTTE, but this issue has been mitigated somewhat recently. [FIGURE 9]

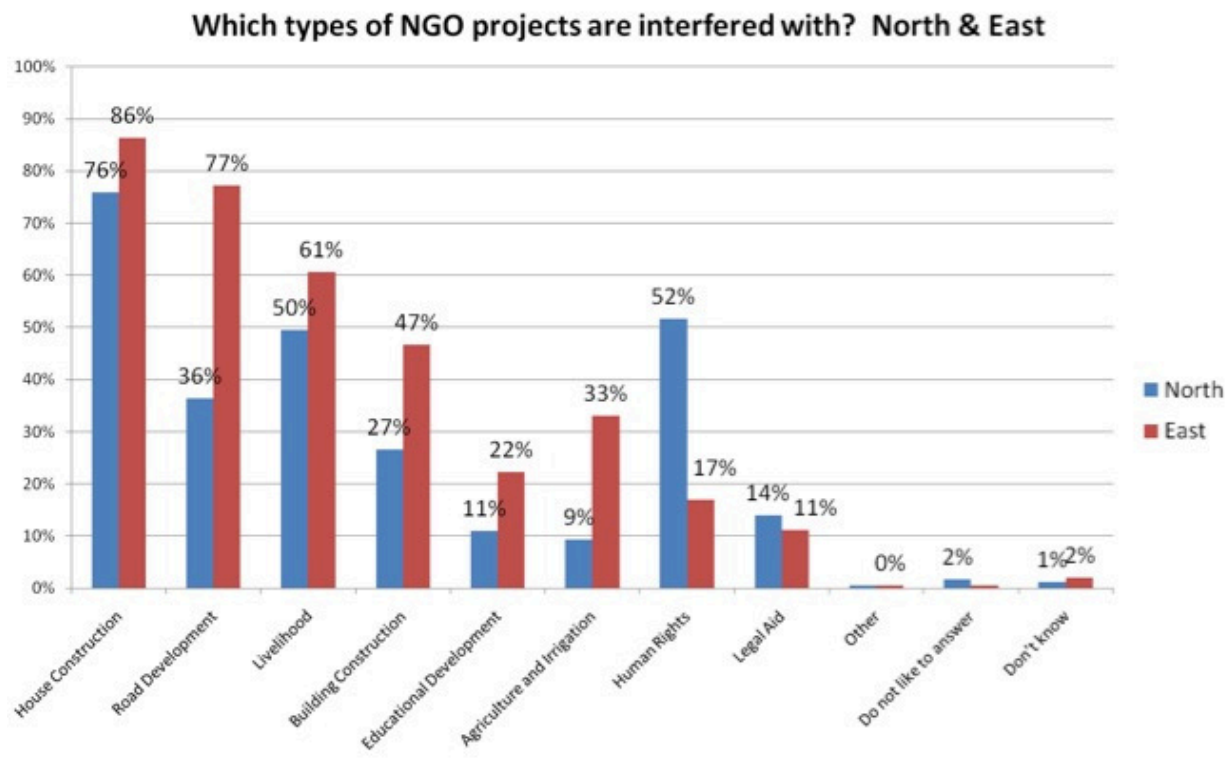


FIGURE 9- **Ongoing Issues-** A Comprehensive Assessment of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Progress. The Social Architects. Colombo, March 14, 2013. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://sangam.org/numbers-lie/>

Nevertheless, people feel that although the current government is doing some rehabilitation work, it needs to expedite the process, but which is also being hampered by extremist groups who have very high and unrealistic expectations. Many of the clergy that I interviewed stressed the importance of reconciliation and long lasting peace, for which some sacrifices are needed, and people have to be ready to talk with relevant authorities, and settle problems through dialogue. From the Christian point of view, if there is repentance on both sides, then society can achieve reconciliation more easily. Due to the magnitude of issues and their gravity, much distrust exists: people feel that the Government is not interested in supporting solutions, while the Government feels that if they offer one solution or fix one problem, then they will immediately be asked to resolve something else. Also, the Government remains wary

that other minority groups that feel marginalized and oppressed will also start demanding support, such as the upcountry people: Indian Tamils, and Muslims, for example.

There have been mixed feelings in regards to the recent UN resolution asking for an impartial investigation into human rights abuses using foreign judges and lawyers. The very proposal is controversial, with polarizing opinions based on Tamil or Buddhist ethnicity. Many people in the North remain distrustful and feel that this will fail, like other truth commissions. Others feel that they should maximize and capitalize on this opportunity, and believe that there should be reciprocation if they tell their stories about disappeared family members and family in prison. They believe that foreign judges and international influence are needed, as they don't trust the Government. And while a new constitution is to be proposed soon, many citizens especially in the North feel that devolution of power is need, akin to a federalist system. However, the term "federalist" has strong negative connotation among many Sinhalese.

Another priest I talked with pointed out that the international community and outsiders view the conflict and reconciliation process only through the lens of the Civil War, however there was unrest and tension dating back to independence that also needs to be addressed. Tamils have nursed grievances for decades since independence, such as lack of basic rights, language restrictions, lack of employment opportunities, lack of political power, and treatment as second-class citizens. These long entrenched problems have still not disappeared just because the War has ended, and the Government and NGOs are now just beginning to work on rehabilitation within the last few years. During the War, the LTTE became very powerful and was not just as an army, military force or ruthless terrorist group as the Sri Lankan Government or the international community perceived them, but as a separate state, as they had their own functioning Government with schools, banks, economic system, and community. It is important

to recognize that what some people perceive as a terrorist, others view as freedom fighters. Annually, November 7 is a hero's day where those who died in War, especially LTTE members are remembered and honored. However, the Government has banned this, as it considers LTTE members to be terrorists. The Government has prevented all public commemorations, and celebration, which shows a clear failure by the Sinhalese dominated Government to recognize the interests and needs of the grieving families. And after the War the LTTE built many beautiful cemeteries, to honor and commemorate their soldiers, and which used to be extremely meaningful places for families to go remember and grieve, but the Government bulldozed all of these locations (around 25 cemeteries have been destroyed in the last 6 years) (Tamil Guardian 2015). This is greatly disrespectful to the Tamil people, and it is their natural human right to grieve for their family members and visit their graves. Even more insulting is that on top of a few of the cemeteries, the Sinhalese army has built Army and Police HQs, such as the Jaffna Army Camp Headquarters in Kopai, which opened as recently as 2013. Other examples of such provocations include building gigantic victory monuments to the Sri Lankan army right on top of these locations. Also, just recently in November 2015, the military showcased a new War monument in the LTTE stronghold of Vanni just a few days before the "Maaveerar Naal," which is a day of remembrance for fallen LTTE soldiers. On this monument is inscribed that it was built to commemorate the lost soldiers who annihilated "brutal and inhuman terrorism," as stated on the army website, a sentiment which is unlikely to be shared by the Tamil community (Tamil Guardian 2015).

This mentality of a single "victorious" side is a big obstacle in bringing about reconciliation, as simple and one-sided notions of victory and defeat, and constantly celebrating one side's triumph over another's is a major hindrance to rebuilding a trusting civic community

on a national level. For example, annually at the end of May, there is a grand celebration hosted by the Government to celebrate the end of the War and the “victory over terrorism,” with showcasing of military weapons and a flashy festival, which clearly shows the attitude that the southern Sinhalese dominated Government is still not ready to fully reconcile. Many Sinhalese, in everyday and common actions, constantly express these one-sided notions. But appeals to one-sided triumphalism are primordialist, and can only exacerbate tensions. Instead, a Social Constructivist approach that can create new relations between the two communities is needed. For example, according to this Reverend, a more meaningful memorialization practice might instead be a day to remember the dead on both sides in a somber and unbiased fashion.

Jaffna is now much more developed, so one doesn’t structurally see many problems or fallout from the War. But in areas such Kilinochi (headquarters of LTTE), the Mannar district, and Mullathieevu (final battle location) one can still see the devastating effects of the War such as poverty, many widows, orphans, and many families searching for disappeared persons.

[FIGURE 10, 11]

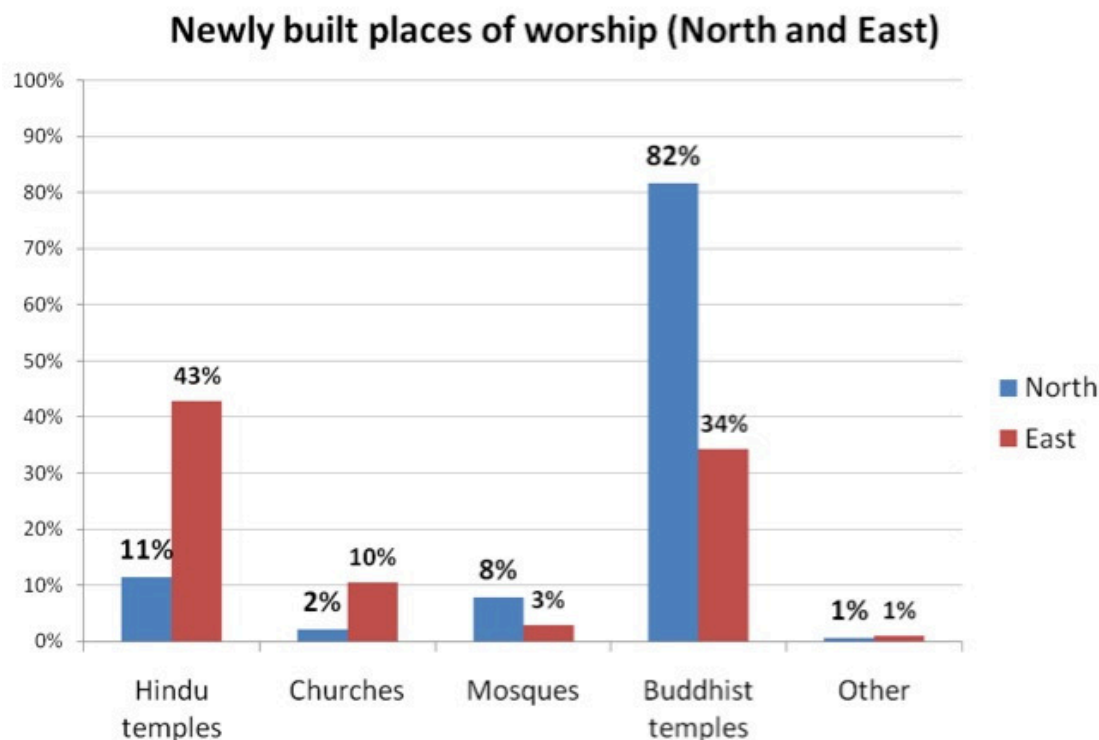
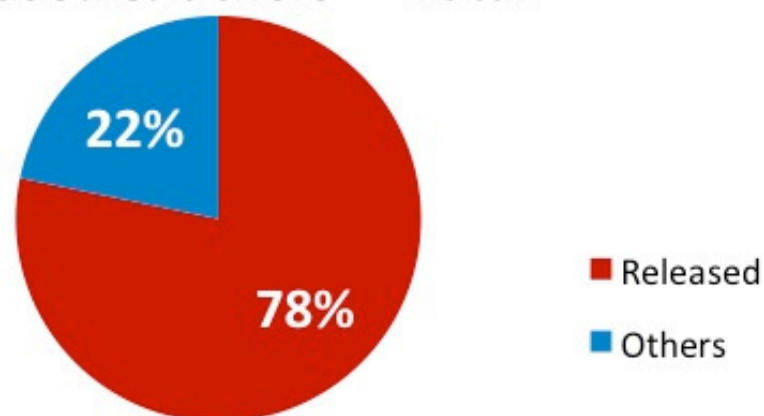


FIGURE 10- **Ongoing Issues-** A Comprehensive Assessment of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Progress. The Social Architects. Colombo, March 14, 2013. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://sangam.org/numbers-lie/>

### Released & Others\* - Total



\* Not yet released, Missing, and Disappearance

FIGURE 11- **Ongoing Issues-** A Comprehensive Assessment of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Progress. The Social Architects. Colombo, March 14, 2013. Retrieved Apr 15, 2016, from <http://sangam.org/numbers-lie/>

This has become a very large issue in the North, where families are searching for their disappeared relatives, or campaigning to have their family members released from prison, many of whom were placed there unjustly and without trial for long periods of time, sometimes even 15-20 years, without being able to see their loved ones. As recently as November 2015, prisoners have started a hunger strike, to protest being in prison without trial for decades. While the President intervened and claimed he would address their concerns, he has done nothing so far. Instead, northern politicians have begun to champion their cause and they will also begin their strike again soon to gain international recognition and bring awareness. Another incident that happened recently is that an 18-year old student committed suicide by jumping in front of a train, after writing to the President and demanding the release of the political prisoners and his imprisoned family members, and receiving no response. Prageeth Ekmaligoda is another disappeared journalist who was abducted and disappeared in 2010, and this became an international incident, as his wife is still searching for him.

This Reverend I spoke with noted that he personally feels that there are no real or positive signs of reconciliation between these two communities, because without justice there cannot be any reconciliation. He feels that reconciliation is very far away, as there have been no tangible steps taken. It has been 6 years since the end of the War, and instead of coming closer together, these communities are moving further away from each other. He feels that the Sinhalese should give up their victorious mentality, take responsibility for past wrongdoings, and take the first step toward reconciliation and rebuilding a peaceful country. The Government needs to take a balanced initiative, instead of imposing restrictions and blaming Tamils for wrongdoings and program failures. The root causes still need to be addressed, instead of just constantly reiterating



that the LTTE are terrorists. While one doesn't have to agree with the actions of the LTTE, the Government still needs to address the root problems or there could very well be instability and violence in future.

The pervasive influence of radical groups, such as the Buddha Balla Senna (an extremist Buddhist group), has had negative effects on the reconciliation process, as these groups spread hate and fear, and amplify primordialist claims at a time of uncertainty and social upheaval to defend community privilege over equality and participation in a shared future. For example, recently these groups demanded the release of two Navy officers who were being held in connection to Ekmaligoda's disappearance and probable murder, and further demanded that no LTTE members should be released. The Reverend's opinion is that the Government shouldn't even hold talks with these racist radical extremist groups. Another example is that the former President Rajapaksa appealed to parliament to grant service extensions to top military personnel accused of committing war crimes to protect their "institutional safety and security" that they would lose when leaving the military. This is directly related to the damning report released by the UN, detailing the numerous human rights violations and wartime atrocities that these leaders have committed, and the need for unbiased foreign committees to persecute and judge these officials in a fair and just court of law. This Reverend feels that the underlying issue is that this current Government is still scared and cannot act, so can one really trust them? He feels that there is "no light and only darkness, and that day by day we are losing the trust of the Tamils due to the actions of the Sinhalese leaders," whom he feels are ultimately responsible.

Nevertheless, compared to the previous extremist authoritarian and corrupt regime, there is a feeling of hope amongst people, since this new Government recently came to power. This was a result of a people's movement where civil groups and people came together and changed

the ruling party; a victory that many people never dreamed could happen. However, while the new Government is perceived to be much better than the previous, there is still much frustration towards it in regards to corruption, delayed cases, and nepotism.

The clergy from the Anglican and Catholic churches that I interviewed implement many programs in regards to reconciliation activities such as meeting with widows, bringing them together to discuss their feelings and share experiences, and bringing students from the North and South to meet students in other regions and interact with each other. Many of the seminars and sermons revolve around themes of trust and reconciliation. The church tries to focus on three areas, social service (easy), such as giving livelihood, social action (difficult) such as changing attitudes and perceptions, and advocacy (often difficult) toward governing bodies to do things a certain way or allocate resources properly. While the church is doing small acts on the individual or familial level, especially for Tamil students, these are modest reconciliation efforts. The problem is that these actions are minor compared to the vast scale of need regarding reconciliation and rebuilding. The church's advocacy programs raise these issues with the Government, emphasizing rule of law, good governance and conveying peoples' interests. While they couldn't advocate to the previous Government, there is now a more responsive Government in place that will actually listen and sometimes implement suggestions. However, as evidenced above, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done by both NGOs and the Government, to further the reconciliation process and rebuild a trusting and caring community and country.

## **5. Global Applications and Lessons**

Globally, there have been multiple ethnic conflicts that have been successfully resolved, utilizing a number of different strategies. John Coakley suggests using different combinations of tactics

such as indigenization, accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, population transfer, boundary alteration, genocide, and ethnic suicide. (Meyjes 2012) John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary have identified a “taxonomy of eight macro political ethnic conflict regulation methods” to be used in combination. These include: “genocide, forced mass population transfers, partition/secession, integration/assimilation, hegemonic control, arbitration, federalization, and power sharing.” (McGarry 1993) Some of these are obviously deeply repugnant but others are ethically sound, and successful scenarios and strategies could be applied to the Sri Lankan context.

The end goal of these benign strategies is maintaining a lasting peace, where individuals feel safe. Lapidoth states that, “Autonomy is a means for diffusion of powers in order to preserve the unity of a state while respecting the diversity of its population.” (Lapidoth 1996 p. 3) Autonomy and decentralization of power allow for specific marginalized groups to have control over their own political, social, economic and cultural traditions. “A territorial political autonomy is an arrangement aimed at granting to a group that differs from the majority of the population in the state, but that constitutes the majority in a specific region, a means by which it can express its distinct identity.” (Lapidoth 1996 p. 33) Caplan writes about five specific strategies, ethnic identity, control, co-optation, manipulation, partition, (military) intervention, and participatory measures. The correct combination of these strategies can help maintain security as shown in the peaceful relations between the Arabs and Berbers in Morocco, the Shia and Sunnis in Bahrain, and the Persians and Bakhitiyaris in Iran. (Caplan 2002) However these strategies are too often only a temporary fix and create a cold peace. “Those seeking to keep the peace often must choose between two evils: a repressive government or continued communal violence. To pretend that violent activists will be deterred by more gentle means is as foolish as

it is dangerous...any acceptable long-term solution to ethnic conflict must not come at the price of brutalization and regular human rights violations” (Caplan 2002 p. 222). [FIGURE 12]

**Table 1. Ethnic Civil Wars Resolved 1944–94.**

Combatants	Dates	Deaths (000s) <sup>1</sup>	Outcome
<b>Military victory (12):</b>			
Karens vs. Myanmar	1945–	43 <sup>2</sup>	Defeat imminent
Kurds vs. Iran	1945–80s	40	Suppressed
Tibetans vs. China	1959–89	100	Suppressed
Papuans vs. Indonesia	1964–86	19	Suppressed
Ibo vs. Nigeria	1967–70	2000 <sup>3</sup>	Suppressed
Timorese vs. Indonesia	1974–80s	200	Suppressed
Aceh vs. Indonesia	1975–80s	15	Suppressed
Tigreans vs. Ethiopia	1975–91	350 <sup>4</sup>	Rebels victorious
Uighurs etc. vs. China	1980	2	Suppressed
Bougainville vs. Papua	1988	1	Suppressed
Tutsis vs. Rwanda	1990–94	750 <sup>5</sup>	Rebels victorious
Shiites vs. Iraq	1991	35	Suppressed
<b>De facto or de jure partition (5):</b>			
Ukrainians vs. USSR	1944–80s	150 <sup>6</sup>	Suppressed, independent 1991
Lithuanians vs. USSR	1945–82	40 <sup>7</sup>	Suppressed; independent 1991
Eritreans vs. Ethiopia	1961–91	350	Independent 1993
Armenians vs. Azerbaijan	1988–	15	De facto partition
Somali clans	1988–	350	De facto partition in N., ongoing in S.
<b>Conflict suppressed by ongoing 3rd-party military occupation (2):</b>			
Kurds vs. Iraq	1960–	215	De facto partition
Lebanese Civil War	1975–90	120 <sup>8</sup>	Nominal power sharing, de facto partition
<b>Settled by agreements other than partition (8):</b>			
Nagas vs. India	1952–75	13 <sup>9</sup>	Autonomy 1972
Basques vs. Spain	1959–80s	1	Autonomy 1980
Tripuras vs. India	1967–89	13	Autonomy 1972
Palestinians vs. Israel	1968–93	2	Autonomy 1993, partly implemented
Moros vs. Philippines	1972–87	50	Limited autonomy 1990
Chittagong hill peoples vs. Bangladesh	1975–89	24	Limited autonomy 1989
Miskitos vs. Nicaragua	1981–88	<1 <sup>10</sup>	Autonomy 1990
Abkhazians vs. Georgia	1992–93	10	Autonomy 1993

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Figures are from Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1993), and Gurr, "Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 347–377, except where noted.

**FIGURE 12- Ethnic Wars Resolved Chart-** Kaufmann, Chaim. (1996). Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars. *International Security* (20)4, 136 – 175.  
<http://bev.berkeley.edu/Ethnic%20Religious%20Conflict/Kaufman.pdf>

Reconstructing ethnic identities would be “most ambitious program to end ethnic violence” notes Kaufmann, “according to the ‘Constructivist Model’ of nationalism ... The key is elite rivalries within communities, in which aggressive leaders use hypernationalist

propaganda to gain and hold power. History does not matter; whether past inter-community relations have in fact been peaceful or conflictual, leaders can redefine, reinterpret, and invent facts to suit their arguments, including alleged atrocities and exaggerated or imagined threats.” (Kaufmann 1996) However, this also means that ethnic conflicts “generated by the promotion of pernicious, exclusive identities should be reversible by encouraging individuals and groups to adopt more benign, inclusive identities.” Policies that encourage trust and the sharing of perspectives and platforms can be adopted. “Leaders can choose to mobilize support on the basis of broader identities that transcend the ethnic division, such as ideology, class, or civic loyalty to the nation-state. If members of the opposing groups can be persuaded to adopt a larger identity, ethnic antagonisms should fade away.” (Kaufmann, 1996)

Due to the Sri Lankan Government’s continued biased perspectives and ethnic favoritism, it will be difficult to create change in leadership styles and thinking at the national and regional levels. Therefore, the burden of crafting a new generation of ethnically diverse and accepting communities and leaders willing to compromise and negate extremism falls on NGOs and other civil society groups, even though they have limited means and resources. According to the TED Talk by Stefan Wolff, there are three avenues to successful ethnic reconciliation; leadership, diplomacy, and institutional design. He uses the example of peaceful resolution between the British and Irish governments in 1998 after centuries of hatred and bloodshed, and the additional modifications to their treaty in 2006 and 2008, which allowed for a lasting peace and power sharing process where everyone’s concerns and demands were negotiated and addressed. Most importantly, the needs and basic rights of individuals and their local communities were taken into consideration, and local leaders stepped up helped reach successful compromises. (Wolff 2010) He also uses the examples of “the lengthy civil war in Liberia, which reached a peaceful

resolution in 2003, the end of fighting in Aceh Indonesia in 2005 and the prevention of civil war in Macedonia in 2001” (Wolff 2010). All of these situations reached a successful resolution through a combination of these three factors; diplomacy that relayed the concerns of each community to the other, wise leadership that recognized that peace and reconciliation is infinitely better than continued conflict, and institutional arrangements that emphasize that cooperation bears fruit in development in ways that contestation does not. Above all, it requires the need for local leaders rising up to communicate and negotiate for peace agreements that continue to last to this day. “So even in situations where outcomes are less than optimal, local leaders and international leaders have a choice, and they can make a difference for the better. A cold war is not as good as a cold peace, but a cold peace is still better than a hot war” (Wolff 2010). Clearly, the NGOs in Sri Lanka need to continue their focus via an implicit Social Constructivist approach, by educating youth with the perspectives of the other communities, and in creating participatory development opportunities. They also need to focus on training future leaders that can continue efforts to build for a sustainable future and foster trusting community relations in the local, regional, and national contexts.

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### **Interviews:**

- Sarvodaya representatives- Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne & Mr. Bandula Senadheera during week of Nov 24, 2015.
- 4 Anglican and Catholic Church representatives/reverends who wish to remain anonymous during week of Dec 1, 2015.
- Center for Peace and Reconciliation representative Father Calier during week of Dec 1, 2015.
- Action Aid representative Muhammad Makeen during week of Dec 1, 2015.

- Caritas representative Father Jeyablan and other staff during week of Dec 8, 2015.
- Sociology Professor at Peradeniya University, Dr. Dhammika Herath, during week of Dec 8, 2015.

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